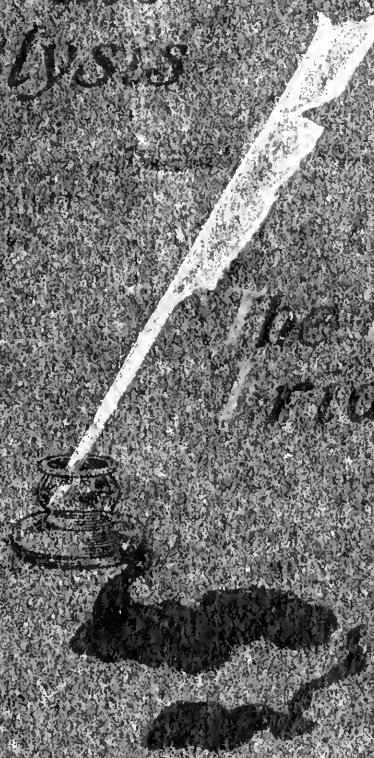
EUGENE FIELD

An Auto-Analysis



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An Auto-Analysis

How One Friar Met the Devil and Two Pursued Him

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THE time is coming when Eugene Field will be gossiped about as is Charles Lamb.

— George W. Cable.

INTRODUCTORY NOTE

HE late Eugene Field first exhibited his unique vein of humour in "The Tribune Primer," a collection of satirical paragraphs written ostensibly for children, though of course, in reality, for their elders, and originally issued in the columns of the Denver Tribune, of which the author was then (1882) editor. Later in the same year appeared from the press of Fred Tredwell, in Brooklyn, "The Model Primer," made up of selections from the former book and illustrated by Hoppin. Both of these editions are now extremely rare, and command handsome prices from collectors.

A number of other early or little known writings of Field, which have been printed hitherto in limited or costly

editions, are being gradually brought out in a form which is both attractive to the fastidious bookman and also within the reach of the average buyer. To this class belong the two items issued in the present volume, neither of which has ever been included in any edition of Field's works. They are exact reproductions of the limited editions issued by Mr. Frank Morris of the Old Book Shop in Chicago, a favourite resort of Field and his literary friends, and the scene of some of his most celebrated pranks and practical jokes.

"An Auto-Analysis" was written in response to the requests for biographical facts which the poet was constantly receiving, and was printed as a four-page leaflet.

"The Story of Two Friars" was first issued in the Chicago Record, and created

a great deal of attention. It was an open secret that Friar Gonsol and Friar Francis stood respectively for the Rev. Frank W. Gunsaulus and the Rev. Frank M. Bristol, two well-known Chicago divines and bibliomaniacs who were close friends of Field. Like the latter, both of these gentlemen were members of the literary set which frequented the Old Book Shop and McClurg's famous Saint and Sinner's Corner, and their penchant for early editions is admirably taken off in this witty and good-natured sketch.

INTRODUCTION

S EUGENE FIELD rose in literary importance he was so importuned by people for autographs, sentiments, verses of his poems, for the poems themselves, for scraps of information of whatever nature concerning himself, that in 1894 he had printed a four-page pamphlet setting forth most of the facts of his career up to date.

This curious but most interesting document also gave a truthful and vivid description of his personal appearance, his tastes and distastes, and tells, too, of his favourite authors

and composers, actor and actress; his dislike of politics and his hatred for war and opposition to capital punishment; his fear to indulge himself from pecuniary considerations, in a growing taste for sculpture and painting, and, curious statement, for Field was rhythmic to his finger tips, his limited love of music.

He analyses his feeling for children, a most interesting proceeding from one who has written such beautiful love songs of childhood, and tells us that they interested him only so far as he found he could make pets of them — the fact being that nobody's babes interested him, naturally, so much as

his own, with a goodly number
of which Dame Nature and
Mrs. Field had not
failed to supply
him.

E would have the privilege of franchise extended to all women and recalls with pride that in nearly a quarter of a century he had written in reverential praise of womankind.

He gives us a chronological list of his publications which is incorrect in the particular that it omits the name of the book issued in 1891 —Echoes from the Sabine Farm— which issue antedated the McClurg publication nearly two years.

Though written with a smile, this auto-analysis of Field's comes strikingly near the truth.

Confessedly careless in dress — matters of the mind and heart being of greater importance to him — Field was rather methodical than otherwise in all other relations of life.

He had a just appreciation of the letters and of bits of manuscript material of people who were eminent or who were likely to arrive at distinction in the world, and he constantly impressed upon friends and acquaintances the importance of preserving all such data.

I never saw him but he would question me as to any interview or association I had with Edwin Booth, Lawrence Barrett, Sir Henry Irving, Joseph Jefferson, W. H.

Crane, Stuart Robson, or any fellow player who had attained celebrity, and would be most solicitous as to whether I had written down my remembrances and impressions of the men and the occasions.

He thought it little less than criminal to neglect an opportunity to record what might ultimately prove of exceeding interest.

Out of this feeling came the Auto-Analysis. It was no unusual vanity that prompted Field to write it. Mr. Joseph Jefferson once said to me that all clever men knew they were clever. Vanity did not consist in knowing one's cleverness, but in parading it.

O FIELD felt. He knew that if the world took an interest in him, and it unquestionably did, it would want facts concerning him, and he determined the world should receive them at first hand — from himself.

This, as I believe, was the real reason he issued the Auto-Analysis, and, beside exemplifying Field's forethought and methodicalness, it served his stated purpose to "give these facts, confessions, and observations for the information of those who, for one reason or another, are constantly applying to me for

biographical data concerning myself."

Of Field's first publication, The Tribune Primer, Denver, 1882, he has written on the fly-leaf of one of the books, that the whole number printed did not exceed fifty. It is the scarcest of his publications. I can see the smile in his eye and the smirk on his lip as he wrote with respect to the book that it was "Very, very scarce."

The Model Primer, which was printed by Tredwell of Brooklyn and cleverly illustrated by Hoppin, is also much sought for by collectors and commands a good price.

It was something of an annoyance to Field that neither this nor his subsequent publication, Culture's Garland, ever yielded satisfactory monetary returns.

HERE were also six uncut issues of Culture's Garland. In his own copy he, in verse, humourously deplores having written the book. It is composed of Field's newspaper articles of a satirical and humourous character. Julian Hawthorne wrote the introduction.

The Echoes from the Sabine Farm was first privately printed by the writer of these lines in 1891. One hundred copies only were made — thirty on Japan and seventy on hand-made paper. The initials were illuminated throughout and

there was a vignette headpiece to each poem. E. H. Garrett did the drawing, and W. H. W. Bicknell the etched title-page. For each of the Japan paper copies Eugene Field and his brother Roswell M. Field wrote autograph poems.

Field often promised his friend, Frank M. Morris, that he would write an introduction to this Auto-Analysis, and that Morris should publish the whole matter, not so much as an evidence of regard as a manifestation of good faith on Field's part. But along with his proposed Life of Horace, which never fructified, went his intentions with regard not only to the intro-

duction but a host of other projects of a literary nature never, alas! to see the light.

FRANCIS WILSON.

EUGENE FIELD

WAS born in St. Louis, Missouri, September 3d, 1850, the second, and oldest surviving, son of Roswell Martin and Frances (Reed) Field, both natives of Windham County, Vermont.

Upon the death of my mother (1856) I was put in the care of my (paternal) cousin, Miss Mary Field French, at Amherst, Massachusetts.

In 1865, I entered the Private School of

Rev. James Tufts, Monson, Massachusetts, and there fitted for Williams College, which institution I entered as a freshman in 1868.

PON my father's death, in 1869, I entered the sophomore class of Knox College, Galesburg, Illinois, my guardian, John W. Burgess, now of Columbia College, being then a professor in that institution.

But in 1870 I went to Columbia, Missouri, and entered the State University there, and completed my junior year with my brother.

In 1872, I visited Europe, spending six months and my patrimony in France, Italy, Ireland, and England.

In May, 1873, I became a reporter

on the St. Louis Evening Journal. In October of that year I married Miss Julia Sutherland Comstock (born in Chenango County, New York) of St. Joseph, Missouri, at that time a girl of sixteen. We have had eight children — three daughters and five sons.

MY newspaper connections have been as follows: 1875–76, city editor of the St. Joseph, Missouri, Gazette; 1876–80, editorial writer on the St. Louis Journal and St. Louis Times-Journal; 1880–81, managing editor of the Kansas City Times; 1881–83, managing editor of the Denver Tribune.

Since 1883 I have been a contributor to the Chicago Record (formerly Morning News).

I wrote and published my first bit of verse in 1879; it was entitled "Christmas Treasures" (see Little

Book of Western Verse). Just ten years later I began suddenly to write verse very frequently; meanwhile (1883–89), I had laboured diligently at writing short stories and tales.

Most of these I revised half a dozen times. One (The Were-Wolf), as yet unpublished, I have re-written eight times during the last eight years.

MY publications have been, chronologically, as follows:

1. The Tribune Primer; Denver, 1882. (Out of print, very scarce.) (The Model Primer; illustrated by Hoppin; Tredwell, Brooklyn, 1882. A Pirate edition.)

2. Culture's Garland; Ticknor, Boston, 1887. (Out of print.)

A Little Book of Western Verse; Chicago, 1892. (Large paper, privately printed and limited.)

A Little Book of Profitable Tales; Chicago, 1889. (Large paper, privately printed and limited.)

LITTLE Book of Western Verse; Scribners, New York, 1890.

4. A Little Book of Profitable Tales; Scribners, New York, 1890.

5. With Trumpet and Drum; Scribners, New York, 1892.

6. Second Book of Verse; Scribners, New York, 1893.

7. Echoes from The Sabine Farm. Translations of Horace; McClurg, Chicago, 1893. (In collaboration with my brother, Roswell Martin Field.)

8. Introduction to Stone's First

Editions of American Authors; Cambridge, 1893.

9. The Holy Cross and other Tales; Stone and Kimball, Cambridge, 1893.

Ill health compelled me to visit Europe in 1889; there I remained fourteen months, that time being divided between England, Germany, Holland and Belgium.

Y residence at present is in Buena Park, a north shore suburb of Chicago.

I have a miscellaneous collection of books numbering 3,500, and I am fond of the quaint and curious in every line. I am very fond of dogs, birds, and all small pets — a passion not approved of by my wife. My favourite flower is the carnation, and I adore dolls. My favourite hymn is "Bounding Billows." My favourites in fiction are Hawthorne's "Scarlet Letter," "Don Quixote," and "Pilgrim's Progress."

GREATLY love Hans Christian Andersen's Tales, and I am deeply interested in folklore and fairy tales. I believe in ghosts, in witches, and in fairies. I should like to own a big astronomical telescope, and a 24-tune music box. My heroes in history are Martin Luther, Mme. Lamballe, Abraham Lincoln; my favourite poems are Korner's "Battle Prayer," Wordsworth's "We are Seven," Newman's "Lead, Kindly Light," Luther's Hymn, Schiller's "The Diver," Horace's "Fons Bandusiae," and Burns' "Cottar's Saturday Night."

DISLIKE Dante and Byron. I should like to have known Jeremiah the prophet, old man Poggio, Horace, Walter Scott, Bonaparte, Hawthorne, Mme. Sontag, Sir John Herschel, Hans Andersen. My favourite actor is Henry Irving; actress, Mme. Modjeska. I dislike "Politics" so called. I should like to have the privilege of voting extended to women. I am unalterably opposed to capital punishment. I favour a system of pensions for noble services in literature, art, science, etc. I approve of compulsory education.

IF I had my way, I should make the abuse of horses, dogs, and cattle a penal offence; I should abolish all dog-laws and dog-catchers, and I would punish severely everybody who caught and caged birds. I dislike all exercise and I play all games very indifferently. I love to read in bed.

I believe in churches and schools; I hate wars, armies, soldiers, guns, and fireworks.

I like music (limited).

I have been a great theatre-goer.

I enjoy the society of doctors and clergymen.

My favourite colour is red.

I do not care particularly for sculpture or for paintings; I try not to become interested in them, for the reason that if I were to cultivate a taste for them I should presently become hopelessly bankrupt.

I am extravagantly fond of perfumes.

I am a poor diner, and I drink no wine or spirits of any kind; I do not smoke tobacco.

I dislike crowds and I abominate functions.

I am six feet in height; am of

spare build, weigh 160 pounds, and have shocking taste in dress.

But I like to have well-dressed people about me.

My eyes are blue, my complexion pale, my face is shaven, and I incline to baldness.

It is only when I look and see how young and fair and sweet my wife is that I have a good opinion of myself.

I AM fond of the companionship of women, and I have no unconquerable prejudice against feminine beauty. I recall with pride that in twenty-two years of active journalism I have always written in reverential praise of womankind. I favour early marriage. I do not love all children.

I have tried to analyse my feelings toward children, and I think I discover that I love them in so far as I can make pets of them.

I believe that, if I live, I shall do my best literary work when I am a grandfather.

I give these facts, confessions and observations for the information of those who, for one reason or another, are applying constantly to me for biographical data concerning myself.

How One Friar Met the Devil and Two Pursued Him

Story of the Two Friars.

It befell in the year 1662, in which same year were many witchcrafts and sorceries, such as never before had been seen and the like of which will never again, by grace of heaven, afflict mankind——in this year it befell that the devil came upon earth to tempt an holy friar, named Friar Gonsol, being strictly minded to win that righteous vessel of piety unto his evil pleasance.

Ow wit you well that this friar had grievously offended the devil, for of all men then on earth there was none more holier than he nor none surer to speak and to do sweet charity unto all his fellows in every place. Therefore it was that the devil was sore wroth at the Friar Gonsol, being mightily plagued not only by his teachings and his preachings, but also by the pious works which he continually did do. Right truly the devil knew that by no common temptations was this friar to be moved, for the which reason did the devil seek in dark and troublous cogitations to bethink him of some new instrument wherewith he might bedazzle the eyes and ensnare the understanding of the holy man. On a sudden it came unto the fiend that by no corporeal allurement would he be able to

achieve his miserable end, for that by reason of an abstemious life and a frugal diet the Friar Gonsol had weaned his body from those frailties and lusts to which human flesh is by nature of the old Adam within it disposed, and by long=continued vigils and by earnest devotions and by godly contemplations and by divers proper studies had fixed his mind and his soul with exceeding steadfastness upon things unto his eternal spiritual welfare appertaining. Therefore it liked the devil to devise and to compound a certain little booke of mighty curious craft, wherewith he might be like to please the Friar Gonsol and, in the end, to ensnare him in his impious toils. Now this was the way of the devil's thinking, to wit: This friar shall suspect no evil in the booke, since never before hath the

devil tempted mankind with such an instrument, the common things wherewith the devil tempteth man being (as all histories show and all theologies teach) fruit and women and other like things pleasing to the gross and perishable senses. Therefore, argueth the devil, when I shall tempt this friar with a booke he shall be taken off his guard and shall not know it to be a temptation. And thereat was the devil exceeding merry and he did laugh full merrily.

Now presently came this thing of evil unto the friar in the guise of another friar and made a proper low obeisance unto

the same. But the Friar Gonsol was not blinded to the craft of the devil, for from under the cloak and hood that he wore there did issue the smell of sulphur and of brimstone which alone the devil hath.

"Beshrew me," quoth the Friar Gonsol, "if the odour in my nostrils be spikenard and not the fumes of the bottomless pit!"

"Nay, sweet friar," spake the devil full courteously, "the fragrance thou perceivest is of frankincense and myrrh, for I am of holy orders and I have brought thee a righteous booke, delectable to look upon and profitable unto the reading."

Then were the eyes of that Friar Gonsol full of bright sparklings and his heart rejoiced with exceeding joy, for he did set most store, next to his spiritual welfare, by

bookes wherein was food to his beneficial devouring.

"I do require thee," quoth the friar, "to shew me that booke that I may know the name thereof and discover whereof it treateth."

THEN shewed the devil the booke unto the friar, and the friar saw that it was an uncut unique of incalculable value; the height of it was half a cubit and the breadth of it the fourth part of a cubit and the thickness of it five barleycorns lacking the space of three horsehairs. This booke contained, within its divers picturings, symbols and similitudes wrought with incomparable

craft, the same being such as in human vanity are called proof before letters, and imprinted upon India paper; also the booke contained written upon its pages divers names of them that had possessed it, all these having in their time been mighty and illustrious personages; but what seemed most delectable unto the friar was an autographic writing wherein 'twas shewn that the booke sometime had been given by Venus di Medici to Apollos at Rhodes.

THEN therefore the Friar Gonsol saw the booke how that it was intituled and imprinted and adorned and bounden, be

knew it to be of vast worth and he was mightily moved to possess it; therefore he required of the other (that was the devil) that he give unto him an option upon the same for the space of seven days hence or until such a time as he could inquire concerning the booke in Lowndes and other such like authorities. But the devil, smiling, quoth: "The booke shall be yours without price provided only you shall bind yourself to do me a service as I shall hereafter specify and direct."

NOW when the Friar Gonsol heard this compact he knew for a verity that the devil was indeed the devil, and but that he

sorely wanted the booke he would have driven that impious fiend straightway from his presence. Howbeit, the devil, promising to visit him again that night, departed, leaving the friar exceeding heavy in spirit, for he was both assotted upon the booke to comprehend it and assotted upon the devil to do violence unto him.

It befell that in his doubtings he came unto the Friar Francis, another holy man that by continual fastings and devotions had made himself an ensample of piety unto all men, and to this sanctified brother did the Friar Gonsol straightway unfold the

story of his temptation and speak fully of the wondrous booke and of its divers richnesses.

When that he had heard this narration the Friar Francis made answer in this wise: "Of great subtility surely is the devil that he hath set this snare for thy feet. Have a care, my brother, that thou fallest not into the pit which he hath digged for thee! Happy art thou to have come to me with this thing, elsewise a great mischief might have befallen thee. Now listen to my words and do as I counsel thee. Have no more to do with this devil; send him to me,

or appoint with him another meeting and I will go in thy stead."

"Nay, nay," cried the Friar Gonsol, "the saints forefend from thee the evil temptation provided for my especial proving! I should been reckoned a weak and coward vessel were I to send thee in my stead to bear the mortifications designed for the trying of my virtues."

"But thou art a younger brother than I," reasoned the Friar Francis, softly; "and, firm though thy resolution may be now, thou art more like than I to be wheedled and bedazzled by these diabolical wiles and artifices. So let me know where this devil abideth with the booke; I burn to meet him and to wrest the treasure from his impious possession."

But the Friar Gonsol shook his head and would not hear unto this vicarious sacrifice whereon the good Friar Francis had set his heart.

"Ah, I see that thou hast little faith in my strength to combat the fiend," quoth the Friar Francis, reproachfully. "Thy trust in me should be greater, for I have done thee full many a kindly office; or, now I do bethink me, thou art assotted on the booke! Unhappy brother, can it be that thou dost so covet this vain toy, this frivolous bauble, that thou wouldst seek the devil's companionship anon to compound with Beelzebub? I charge thee, Brother Gonsol, open thine eyes and see in what a slippery place thou standest."

Now by these argumentations was the Friar Gonsol mightily confounded, and he knew not what to do.

"Come, now, hesitate no longer," quoth the Friar Francis, "but tell me where that devil may be found--I burn to see and to comprehend the booke--not that I care for the booke, but that I am grievously tormented to do that devil a sore despight!"

"Odds boddikins," quod the other friar, "meseemeth that the booke inciteth thee more than the devil."

"Thou speakest wrongly," cried the Friar Francis. "Thou mistakest pious zeal for sinful selfishness. Full wroth am I to hear how that this devil walketh to and fro, using a sweet and precious booke for the temptation of holy men. Shall so righteous an instru-

ment be employed by the prince of heretics to so unrighteous an end?"

"Thou sayest wisely," quoth the Friar Gonsol, "and thy words convince me that a battaile must be made with this devil for that booke. So now I shall go to encounter the fiend!"

"Then by the saints I shall go with thee!" cried the Friar Francis, and he gathered his gown about his loins right briskly.

AT when the Friar Gonsol saw this he made great haste to go alone, and he ran out of the door full swiftly and fared him where the devil had appointed an appoint-

ment with him. Now wit you well that the Friar Francis did follow close upon his heels, for though his legs were not so long he was a mighty runner and he was right sound of wind. Therefore was it a pleasant sight to see these holy men vying with one another to do battle with the devil, and much it repenteth me that there be some ribald heretics that maintain full enviously that these two saintly friars did so run not for the devil that they might belabor him, but for the booke that they might possess it.

It fortuned that the devil was already come to the place where he had appointed the appointment, and in his hand he

had the booke foresaid. Much marveled he when that he beheld the two friars faring thence.

"I adjure thee, thou devil," said the Friar Gonsol from afar off, "I adjure thee give me that booke else I will take thee by thy horns and hoofs and drub thy ribs together!"

"Heed him not, thou devil," said the Friar Francis, "for it is I that am coming to wrestle with thee and to overcome thee for that booke!"

With such words and many more the two holy friars bore down upon the devil; but the devil thinking verily that he was about to be beset by the whole church militant stayed not for their coming, but presently departed out of sight and bore the booke with him.

Ow many people at that time saw the devil fleeing before the two friars, so that, esteeming it to be a sign of special grace, these people did ever thereafter acknowledge the friars to be saints, and unto this day you shall hear of St. Gonsol and St. Francis. Unto this day, too, doth the devil, with that same booke wherewith he tempted the friar of old, beset and ensnare men of every age and in all places. Against which devil may heaven fortify us to do battle speedily and with successful issuance.

Note: Tradition hath it that the two friars were Rev. F. W. Gunsaulus and Rev. F. D. Bristol. But tradition may not always be trusted.

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